

Division of Public Health and Indian River School District Announce TB Response at Georgetown Elementary School

DOVER – The Division of Public Health (DPH) and Indian River School District announced today that approximately 50 individuals at Georgetown Elementary School in Sussex County may have been exposed to someone with active tuberculosis (TB). DPH is making contact with those individuals to offer free screenings, as well as treatment if needed. To protect medical privacy, no additional information will be provided regarding the source of the infection or the individuals who need testing.

While the risk of transmission is low, the medical guidance is that those who have been exposed and become infected with TB bacteria should be treated so they do not develop TB disease. DPH and the school's administrators met with staff on Monday to provide them with information on TB and next steps. Letters with information on testing and a fact sheet are being sent home today with students who have been identified for testing. For the remainder of families in the school, a general information letter and fact sheet are being sent home with students.



“We understand that this news can be concerning to parents and

the community. I am grateful to the Indian River School District and the team at Georgetown Elementary School who are working closely with us,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “The letters clearly indicate which students have been identified for testing. Situations such as these are a reminder that TB is still active in our state and it’s important to test those who may be at risk for the disease.”

TB is a bacteria that can be inhaled into the lungs of others when a nearby person with an active form of the disease coughs (known as TB disease or active TB), sneezes, sings or laughs. People with TB disease are most likely to spread the disease to people they spend time with every day, such as family or other household members, close friends, and coworkers. TB is not spread by shaking hands, touching, sharing food or drink, utensils, bed linens or toilet seats, sharing toothbrushes, or saliva from kissing.

“In consulting with the Division of Public Health, we believe the risk of transmission in this case to be low,” Indian River School District Superintendent Mark Steele said. “However, as a precautionary measure, we join DPH in recommending that certain individuals be tested for the disease. We have facilitated testing for those individuals determined to be in need of screening. The Indian River School District is committed to taking every possible precaution to assure the health and safety of students, staff and parents.”

Not all people who are exposed to someone with TB disease become infected. In those who do have a positive test result, there are two forms of TB. One is “latent TB,” where the germ is “asleep” in the body. The person is not sick and cannot spread the germs to others. Medication is provided to kill the “sleeping” germ so the person does not become sick in the future.

The second form is “active TB disease,” in which the TB germ has made the person sick. Left untreated, this can result in

serious illness. Medication is available to kill the germs in the active form of TB, too, and cure the patient. About 5 percent to 10 percent of persons infected with TB bacteria will develop the disease at some time in their lives; most within the first two years after the infection occurs.

Signs and symptoms of TB may include a progressively worsening cough that lasts more than two weeks, fatigue, weakness, weight loss, night sweats, fever, chills and chest pain. TB can affect any bodily organ, but is infectious to others only when it occurs in the lungs or larynx (voice box).

TB is generally on the decline throughout the country but vigilance is important. Delaware had 16 cases of TB disease (also known as “active TB”) in 2016, and 15 in 2017.

For additional information on tuberculosis, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/default.htm> or the Division of Public Health at <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/tbfaq.pdf>.

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Espanol: <https://news.delaware.gov/2018/09/25/la-division-de-salud-publica-y-el-distrito-escolar-de-indian-river-anuncian-la-respuesta-tb-en-la-escuela-primaria-de-georgetown/>

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS,

urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.